

Blessings and Warnings near the End

The Delectable Mountains

Christian and Hopeful come to the Delectable Mountains from which they will be able to see the gate of the Celestial City. These mountains are described with garden imagery (gardens, orchards, vineyards, fountains of water) reminding us of the Garden of Eden. Bunyan wants to give us a view of the fellowship of believers in the gathering of the church, which is to be a place of rest and refreshment. They encounter four shepherds (Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere). We are taught here some important lessons:



1. How thankful we should be for the privilege of the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day is meant to be a day of rest and refreshment, a day for coming together under the Word to be instructed, challenged, encouraged, corrected.

*Beautiful Sabbath, how peaceful the light
Wafted from Eden so tranquil and bright;
Drawing us nearer to Jesus our King
While in His temple we gather and sing* (Fanny Crosby).

2. How thankful we should be for the provisions of godly pastors and elders.

The shepherds show Christian and Hopeful several sights that are distressing, but one is glorious

- Hill Error with its dangerous precipice where some have been taken in by false teaching and been dashed in pieces below.
- Hill Caution where blind men (who were imprisoned and blinded by Giant Despair) are seen walking among the dead.
- Byway to Hell with its darkness, the sound of torment, the smell of brimstone.
- Ridge Clear where they can look and see the Celestial City.

Several Encounters

1. Ignorance from the country of Conceit. He is wise in his own conceit. While he is blind, he claims to see. What folly it is to trust your own self-righteousness and human works for the purpose of gaining acceptance with God!

2. Turn-away from the town of Apostasy. He is captive to seven devils (Matt. 12:45). He would not listen to counsel, refused the cross, resolved to go back to his own town, did much damage to Evangelist, but now is destined for destruction.
3. Little Faith who was robbed of his money by Faint-Heart, Mistrust and Guilt and is severely weakened in his spiritual journey as well as his usefulness. Little Faith was a true Pilgrim, but was hindered by his little faith. He retained his certificate of admittance, and the jewels of grace. But while weak faith may take us to our journey's end, we will arrive sore and weary and suffer needless pain.
4. Flatterer, a man in disguise. He looked white, but he was black. He was an open friend, but a secret enemy. He disguises himself as an angel of light, but the pathway he takes this pilgrims gradually turns and twists and Christian and Hopeful veer from the Celestial City and they don't realize it till they are caught in a net (Prov. 29:5). They repent of their error and folly. They are delivered and chastened by a shining one (Heb. 1:14).
5. Atheist who sees no sign of God in the stars above nor in the beauties around him. He charges Christian and Hopeful with ignorance, traveling to a make-believe world, to gain nothing, without any destination. Hopeful and Christian stimulate each other by saying: we have seen the Celestial City with our own eyes, we must walk by faith not by sight, we must turn from error and embrace truth, we don't want to be chastened again. Atheist goes backward while Christian and Hopeful go forward.

The Enchanted Ground

When they come to these grounds, believers are tempted to sleep; it is a period of peace in which we might relax and take our ease, indulge in rest, become lukewarm. Here the believer is tempted to "insensitivity, inaction and insecurity" (Spurgeon). This is the longest discourse section in Pilgrim's Progress, and it shows that this is not a short stretch in the Christian life, but a long stretch of the way. Hopeful is ready to slumber, but Christian calls him to prayerfulness and watchfulness, remembering that the shepherds had warned them not to sleep here. Christian recommends that they engage in spiritual conversation to remain alert, and asks Hopeful to recount how he became a pilgrim. This is a detailed and succinct account of God's work in the soul.



Beulah Land



Finally they come to Beulah Land, the outer suburbs of heaven (Is. 62:4) where the sun shines night and day, the air is sweet and pleasant, the flowers bloom everywhere, the birds sing continually. From here they have a closer vision of the Celestial City with its splendor

and brightness, gems, diamonds where the Bridegroom feasts with His bride, where His praises are sung. They meet the Gardener who leads them on a tour of the vineyards and gardens. God's people can at times have a foretaste of heaven. Just before he died, Thomas Scott said: "This is heaven begun, I have done with darkness forever, Satan is vanquished. Nothing now remains but salvation with eternal glory."

Questions for Discussion

1. The delectable mountains describe the privileges of being in the Lord's house on the Lord's Day. What are some of those privileges? Why do we need them? How does our soul benefit from these privileges?
2. The names of the shepherds of the Delectable Mountains are Knowledge, Experience, Watchful and Sincere. Consider these attributes; why is each of these qualities important in a shepherd?
3. Christian meet with Ignorance, Flatterer, Atheist. Which character do you find the most frightening? What do we need when we encounter them?
4. How can we become sleepy like Hopeful at the Enchanted Ground? Can you think of times when that has marked you? What is the answer?
5. Do you ever have a longing to see the Celestial City? Do you feel at times this desire to be with Christ, which is far better?